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Neilson

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(54) **CASE FOR STORING, CARRYING AND DISPLAYING A HANDHELD STRINGED MUSICAL INSTRUMENT**

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(52) **U.S. Cl.** **206/314**; 206/45.23; 206/204
(58) **Field of Search** 206/14, 314, 204, 206/213.1, 45.2, 45.21, 45.23, 45.24; 84/453; 312/31, 31.03–31.06

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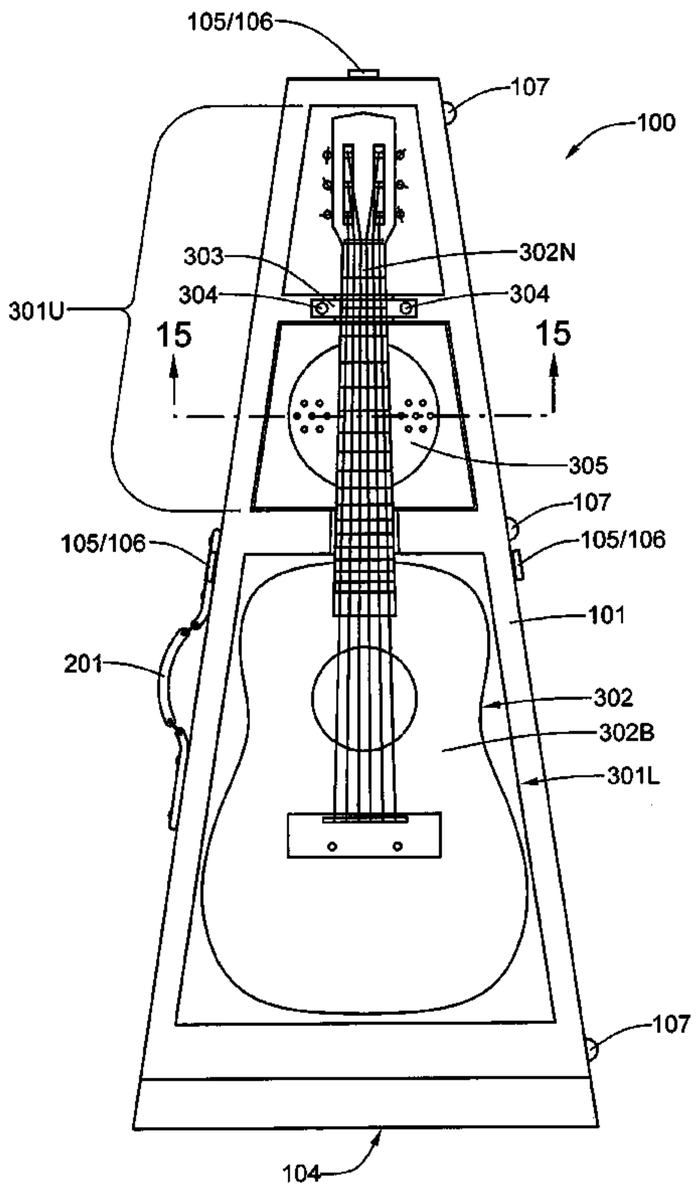
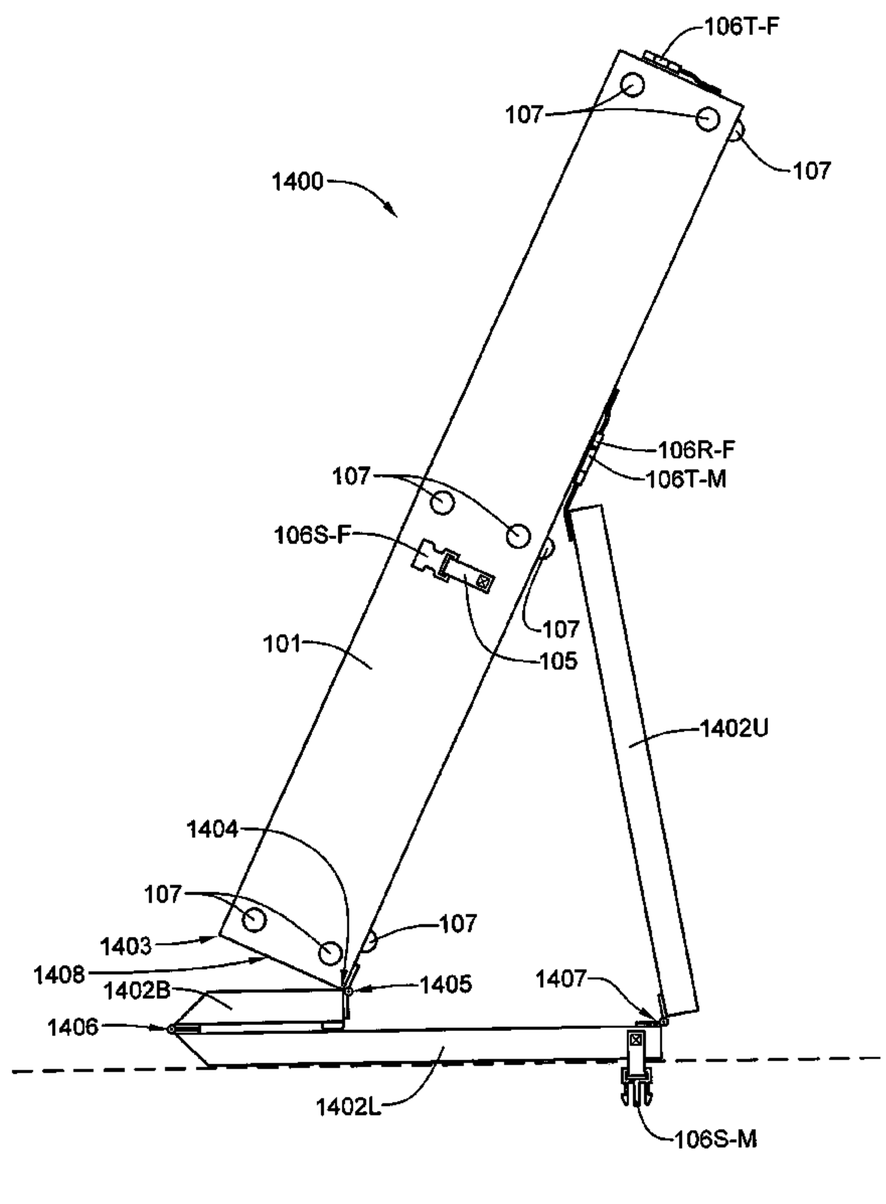
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A case for storing, carrying and displaying a handheld stringed musical instrument includes a main body incorporating an instrument receptacle, the body having a narrowed upper end portion for receiving the neck of the instrument and a widened lower end portion for receiving the body of the instrument, the case further including an articulated cover securable to the main body for reversably covering the instrument receptacle, the cover also being hingeably connected along a linear edge of the widened lower end portion of the body, foldable beneath the main body, and attachable to a medial portion of the back side of the main body. The case may also incorporate a humidifier in a portion of the case below where the neck of the instrument is positioned. The humidifier includes a container having a perforated lid. A damp sponge is placed within the container, thereby maintaining a relatively constant level of humidity within the case, when closed.

16 Claims, 13 Drawing Sheets





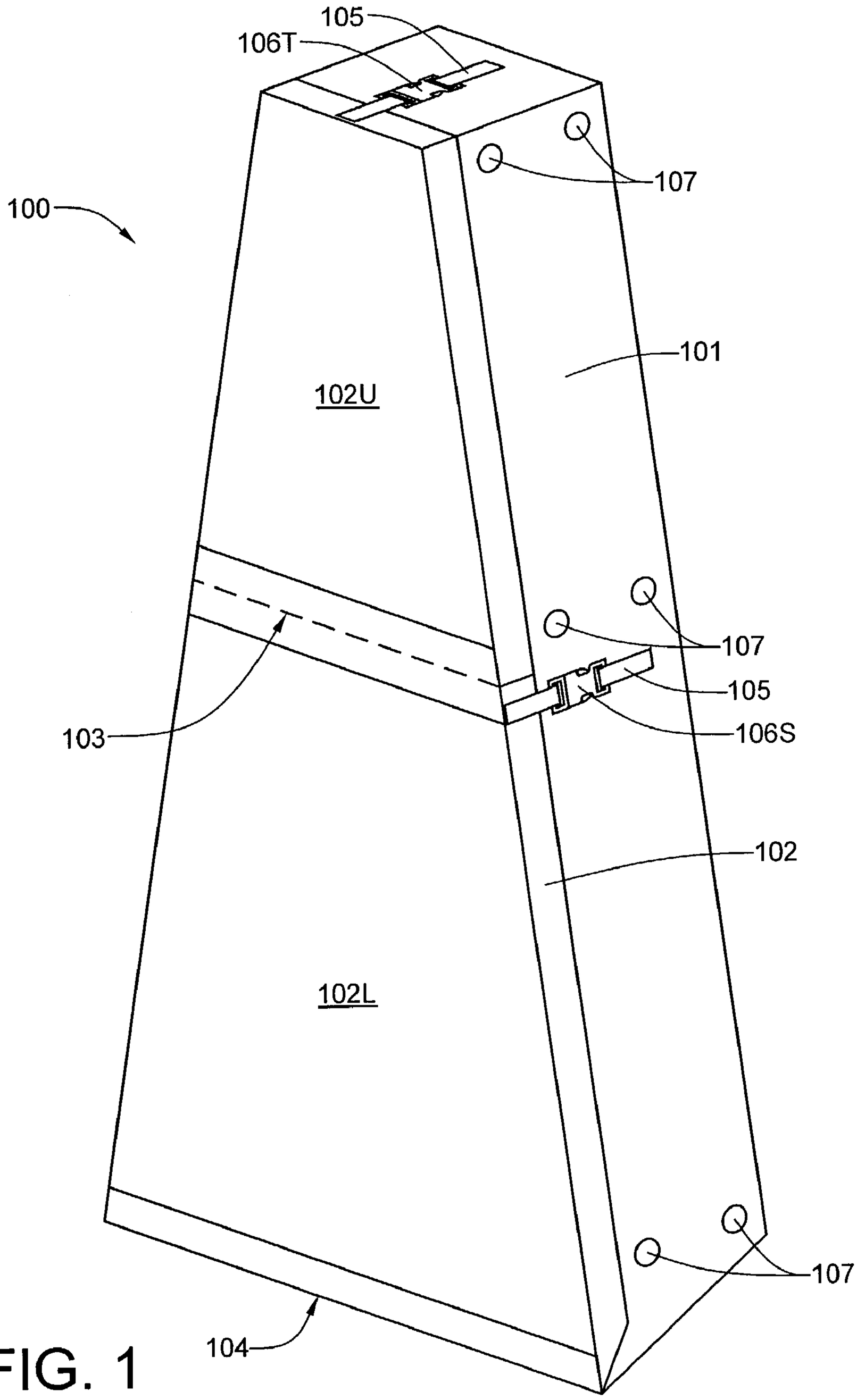


FIG. 1

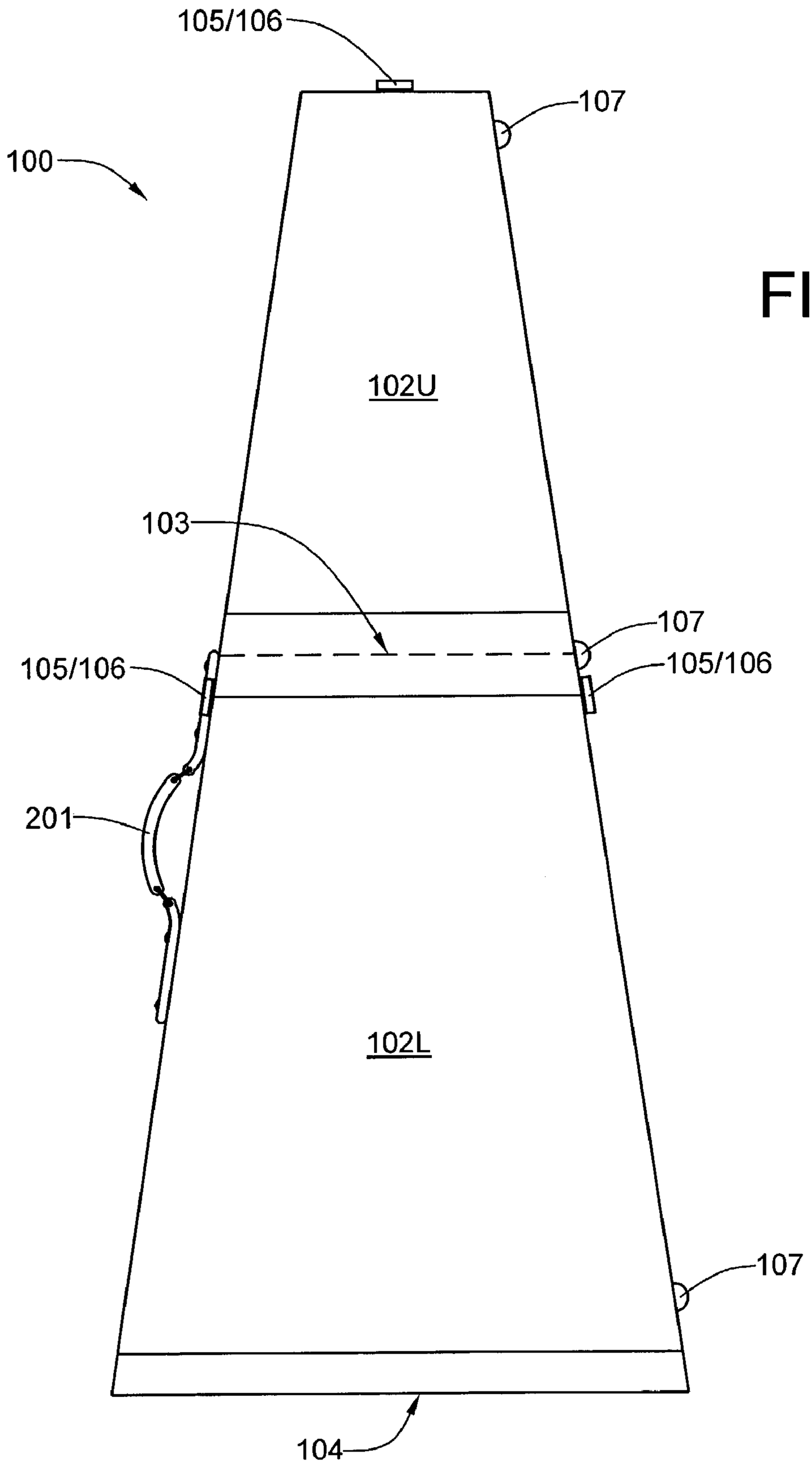
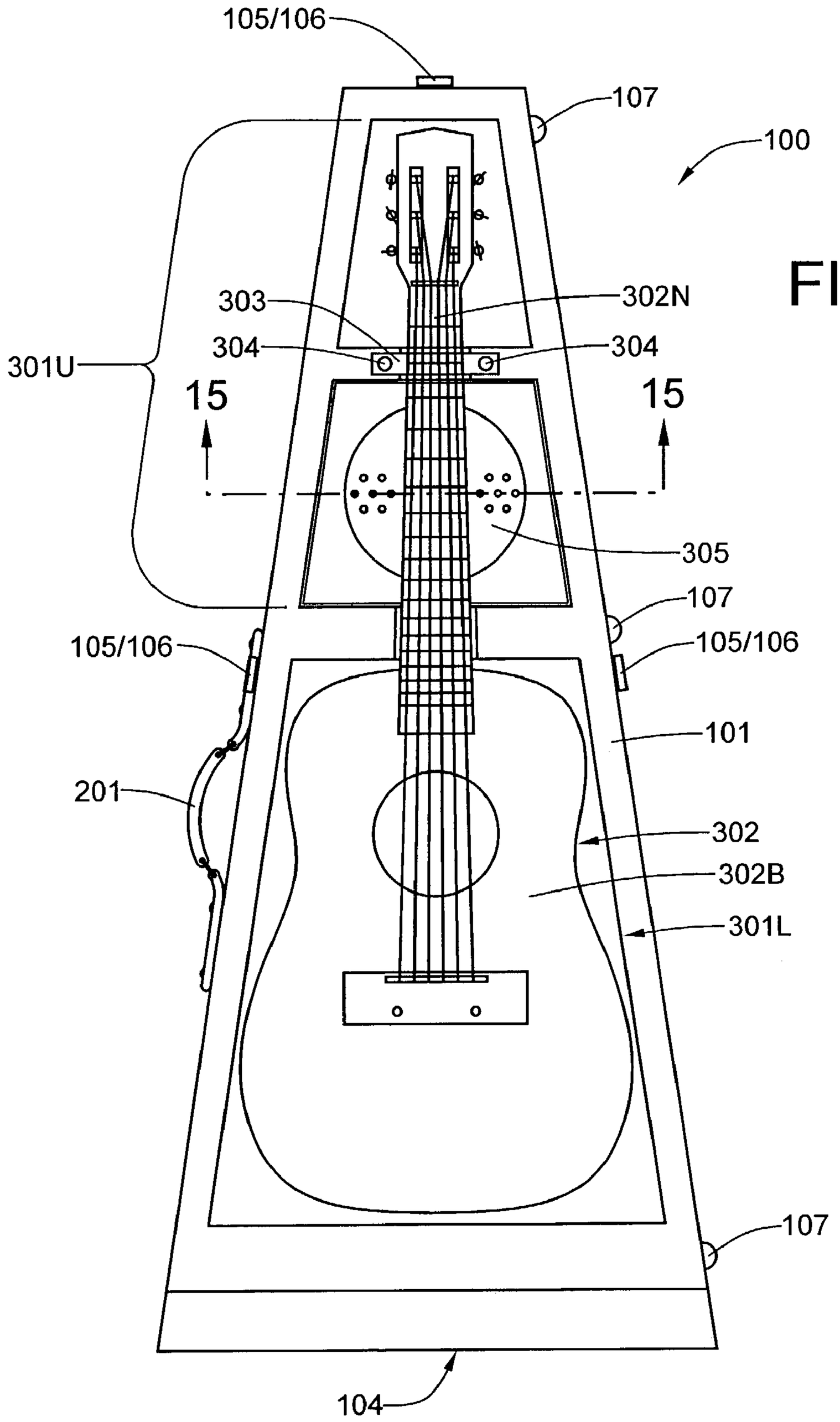


FIG. 2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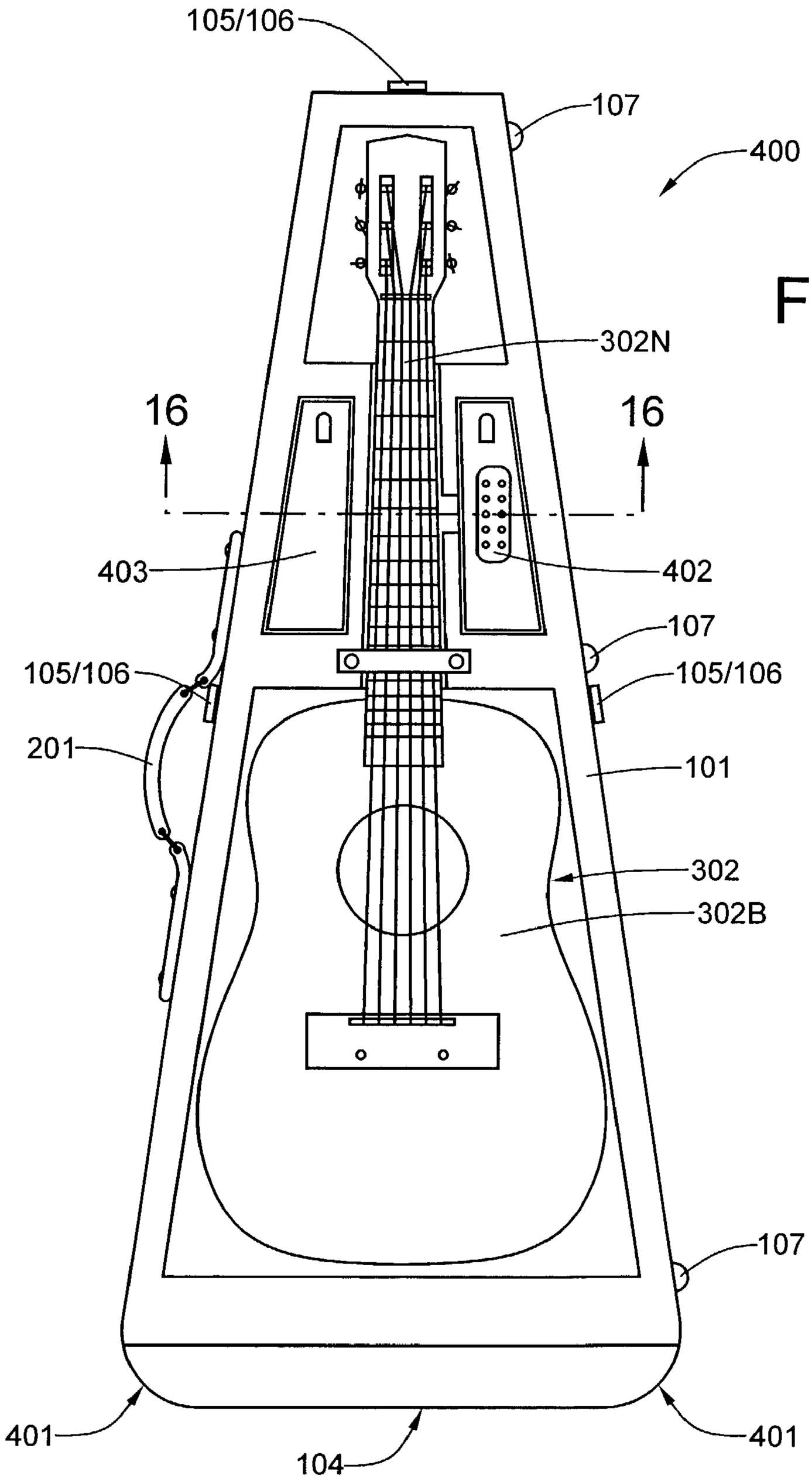
107
100
303
302N
304
304
301U
15
15
305
107
105/106
105/106
101
201
302
302B
301L
107
104

FIG. 3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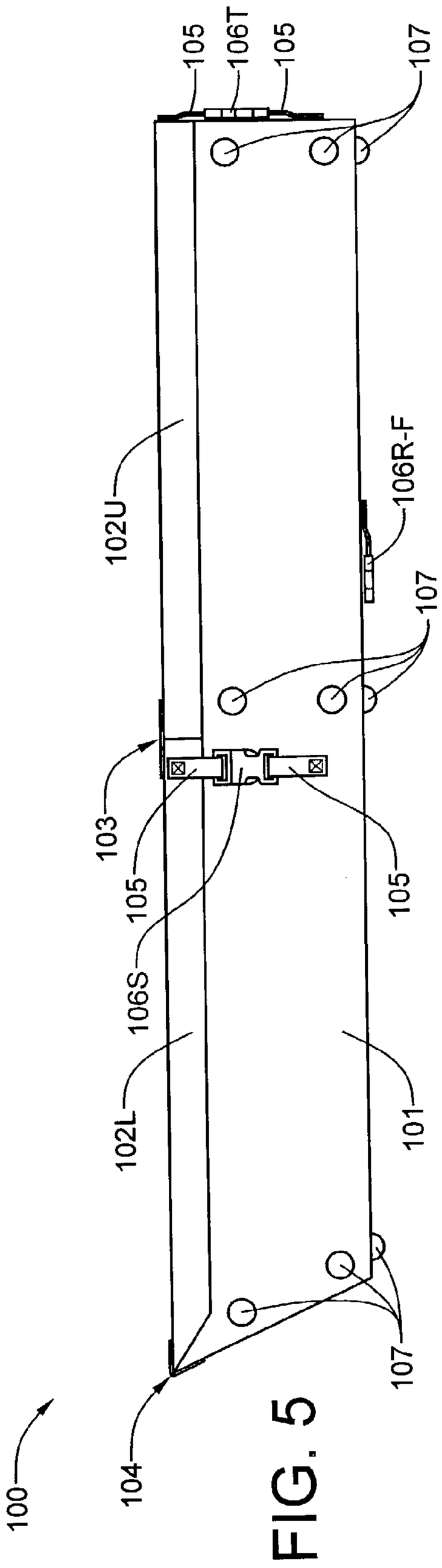
107
400
302N
16
16
403
402
107
105/106
105/106
201
101
302
302B
107
401
104
401

FIG. 4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106T
105
107
102U
106R-F
107
103
105
106S
102L
101
104
100

FIG. 5

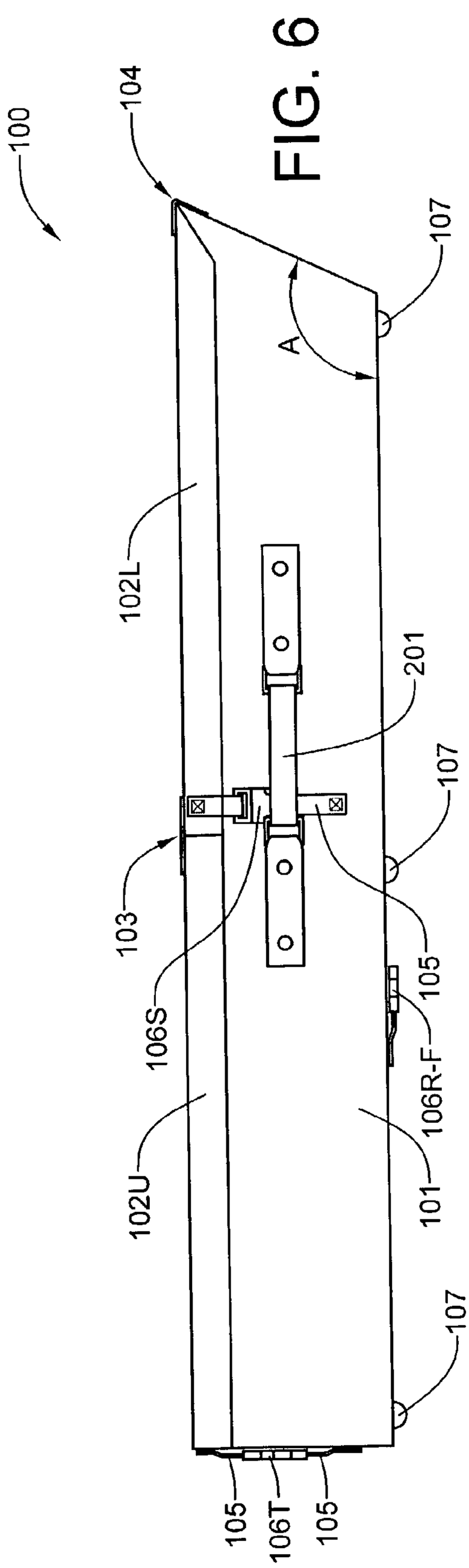
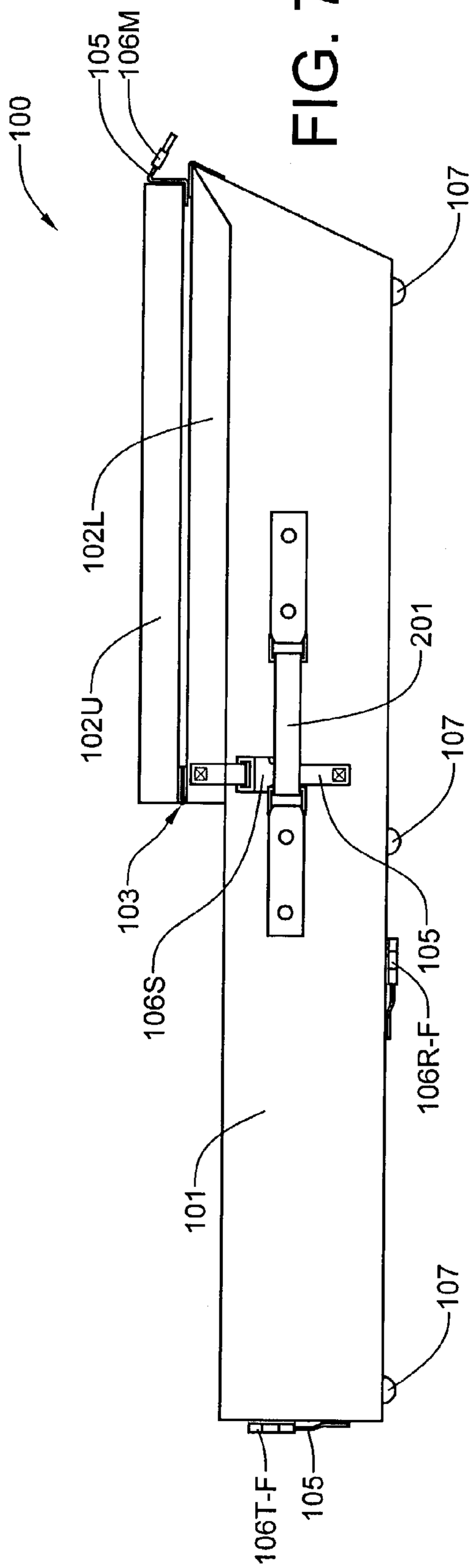

100
104
107
A
102L
201
103
106S
107
105
106R-F
102U
101
105
106T
105
107

FIG. 6

FIG. 7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105
106M
107
102L
102U
201
107
103
106S
105
106R-F
101
107
106T-F
105

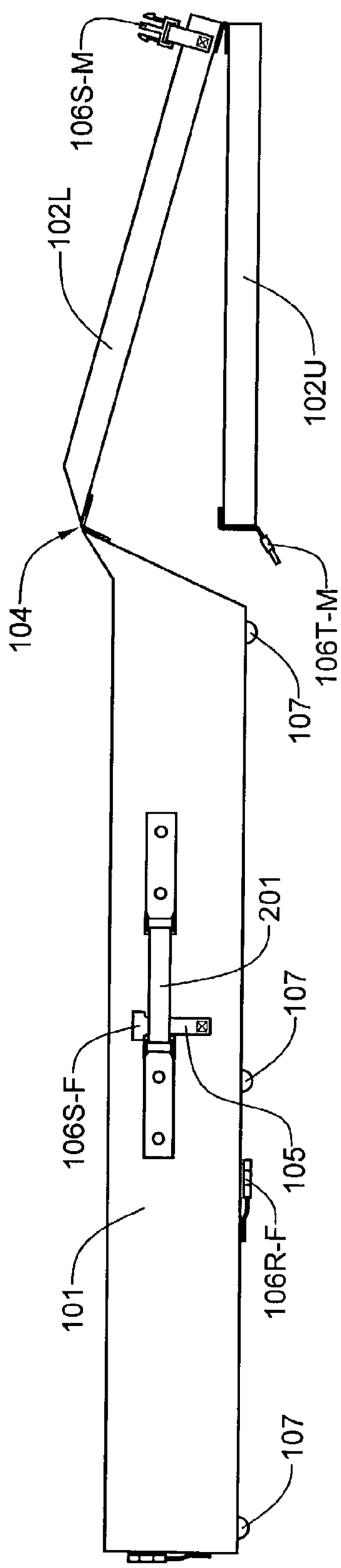
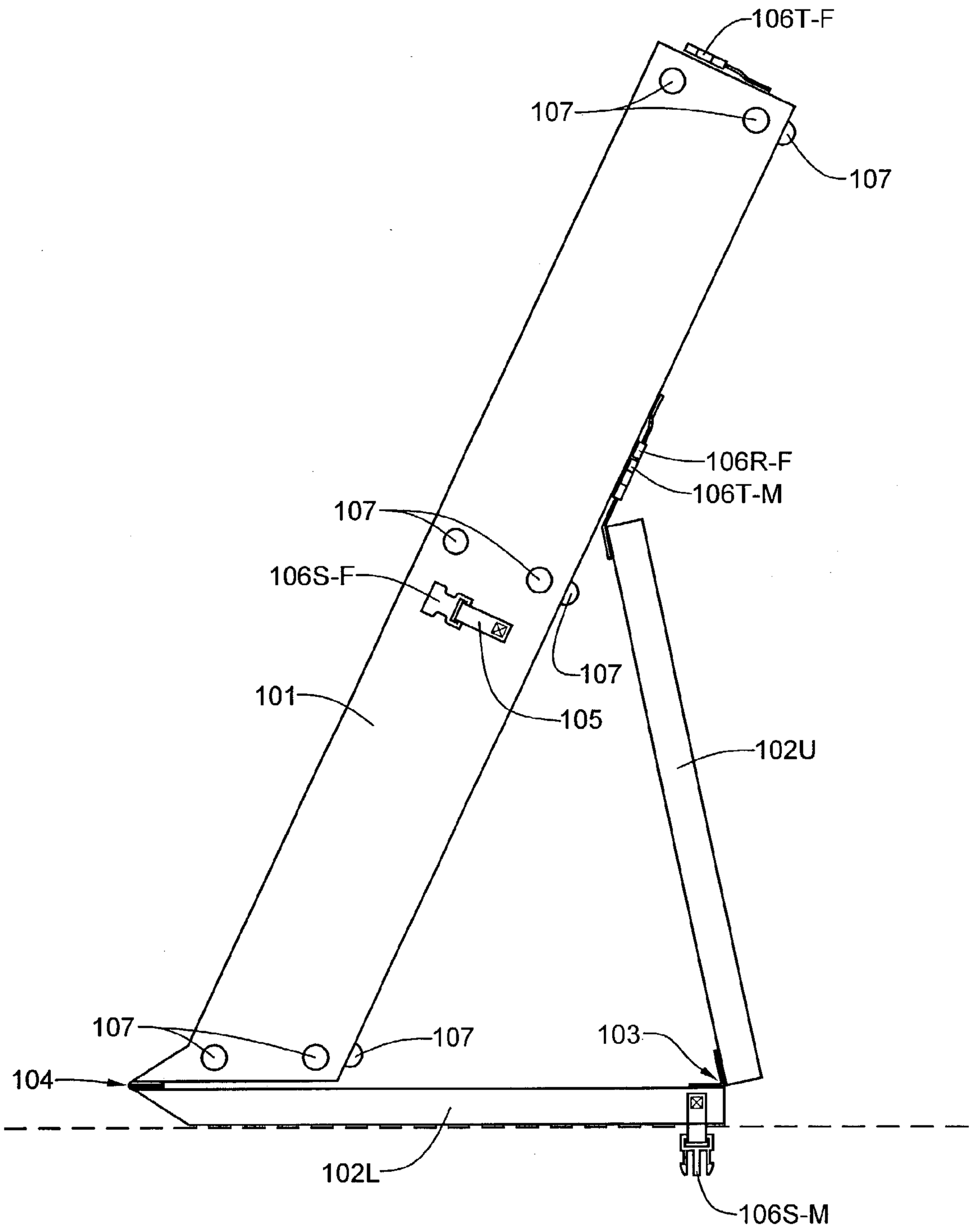

106S-M
102L
102U
104
106T-M
107
201
107
106S-F
105
106R-F
101
107

FIG. 8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107
107
106R-F
106T-M
107
106S-F
107
101
105
102U
107
107
103
104
102L
106S-M

FIG. 9

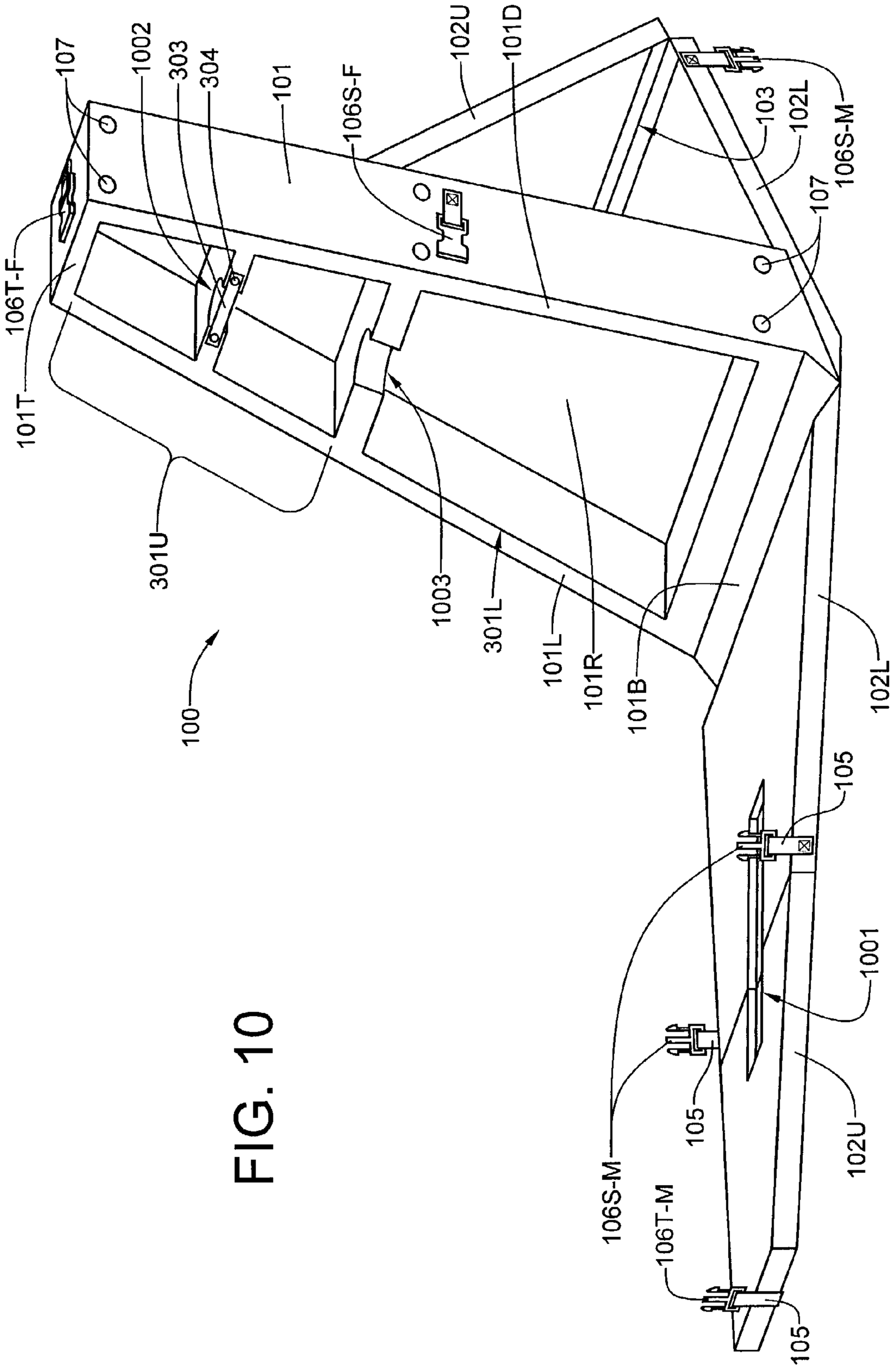
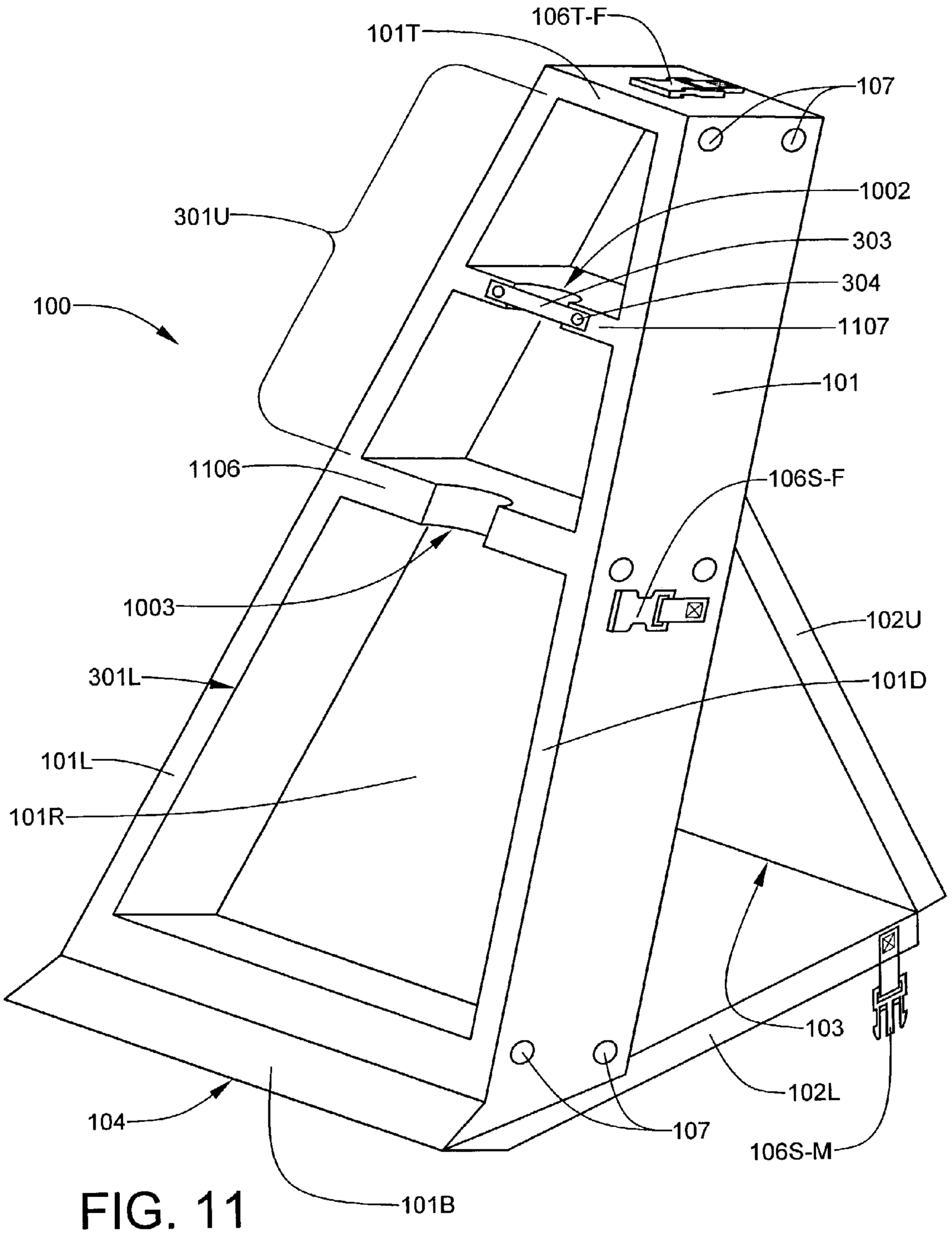

107
1002
303
304
101
106S-F
102U
101D
103
102L
106S-M
107
106T-F
101T
301U
100
1003
301L
101L
101R
101B
102L
105
1001
102U
106S-M
106T-M
105
105

FIG. 10


106T-F
101T
107
1002
301U
303
304
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1107
101
1106
106S-F
1003
102U
301L
101D
101L
101R
103
102L
104
107
106S-M
101B

FIG. 11

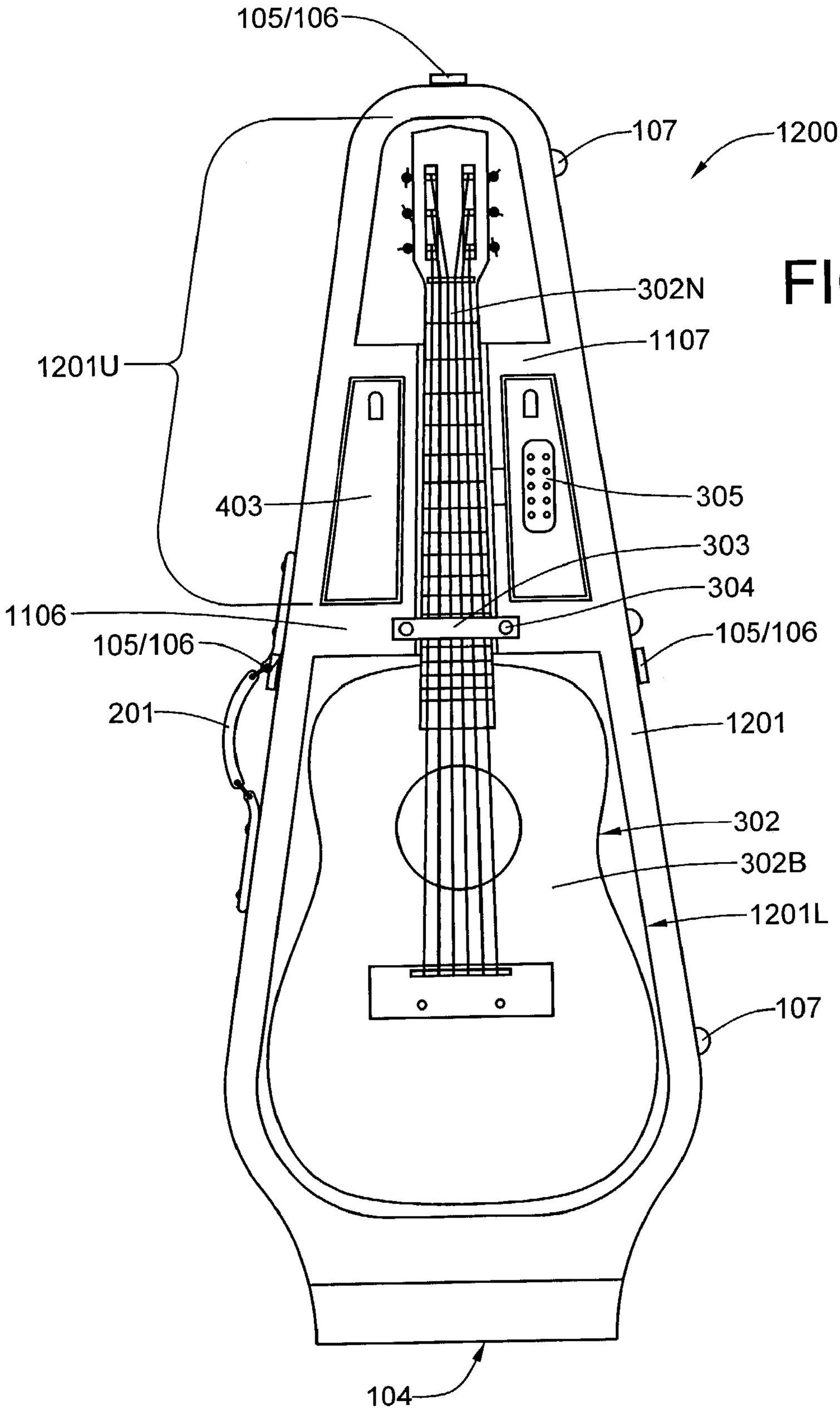
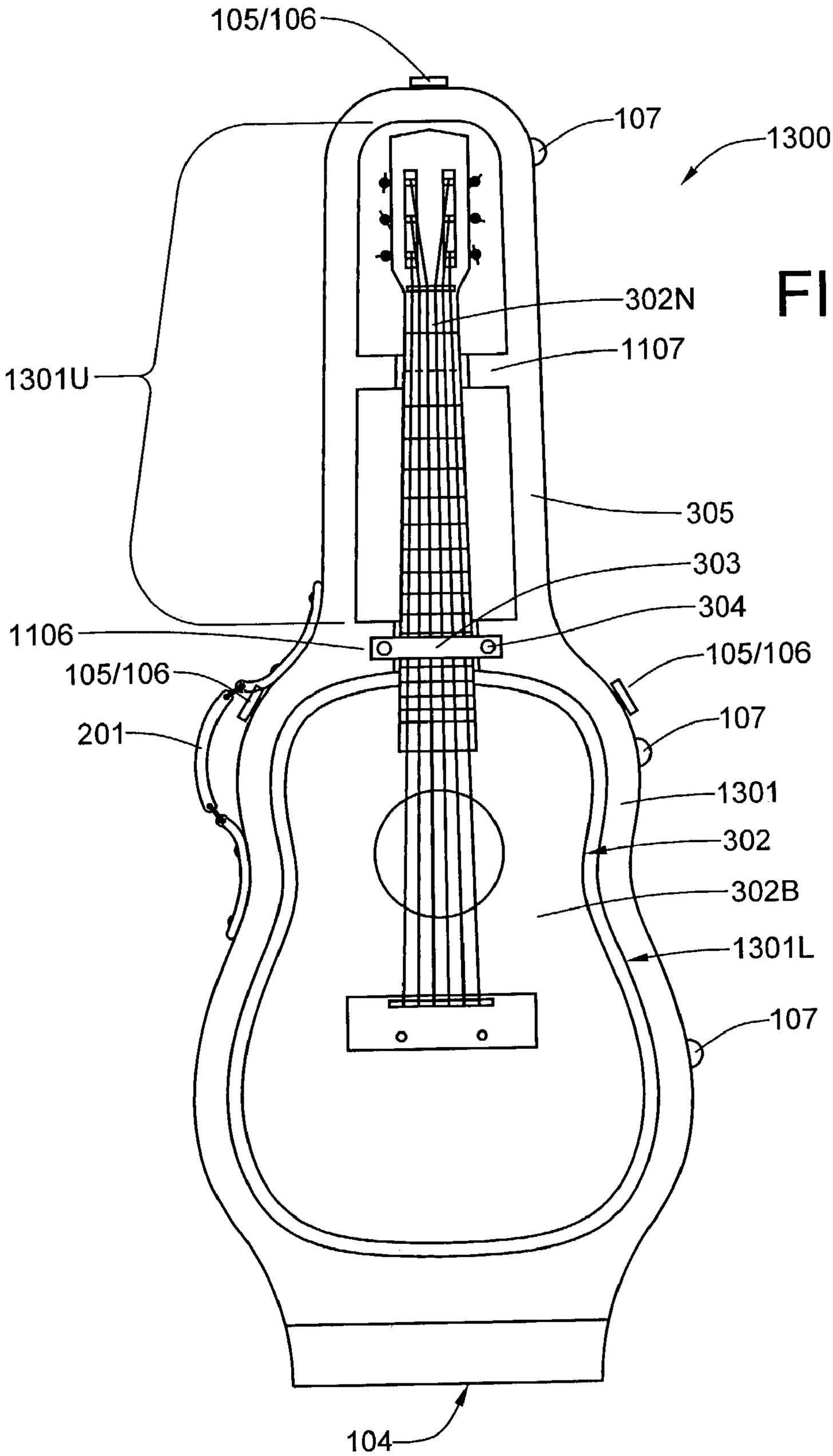

105/106
107
1200
302N
1107
1201U
403
305
303
304
1106
105/106
105/106
201
1201
302
302B
1201L
107
104

FIG. 12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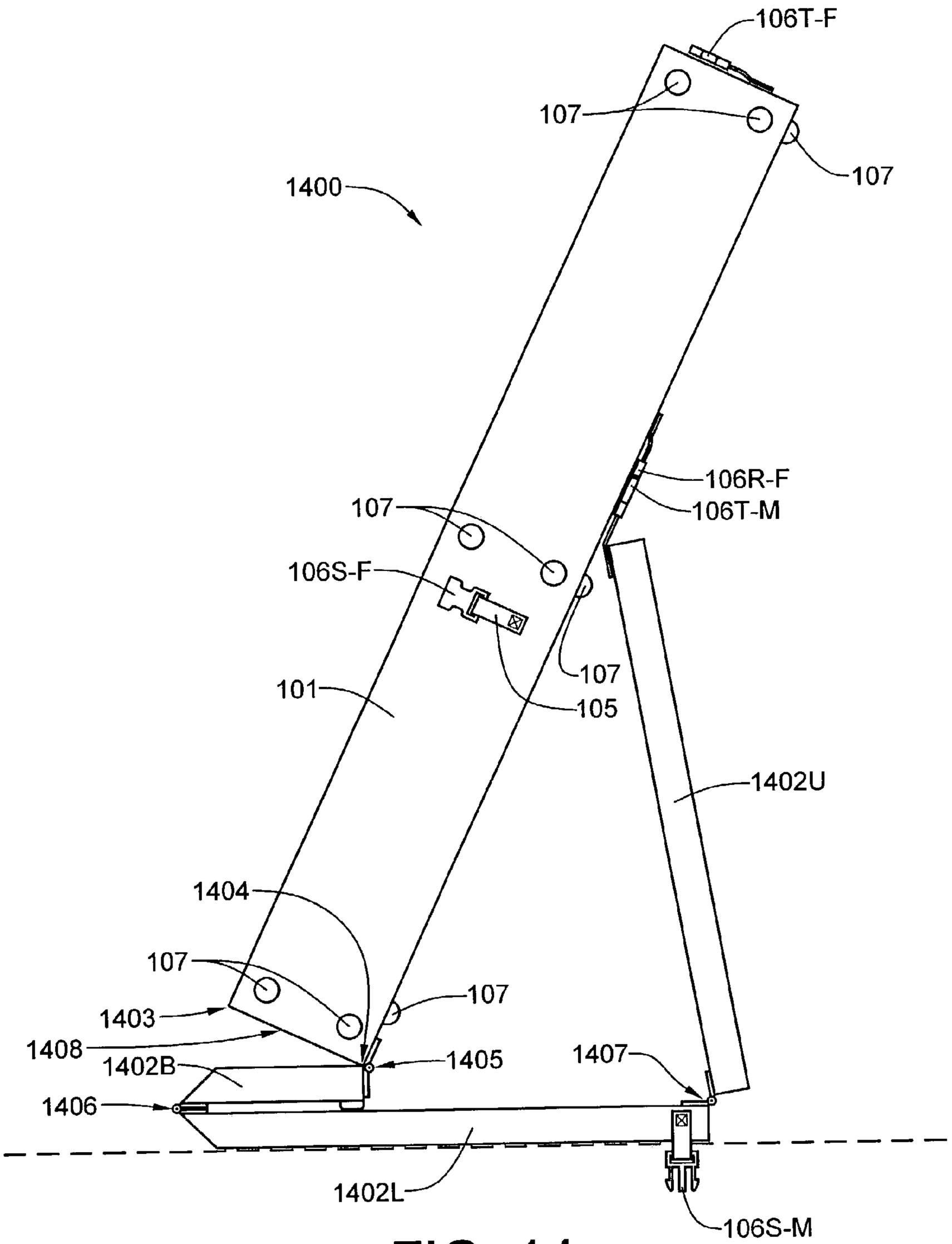
107
1300
302N
1107
1301U
305
303
304
1106
105/106
105/106
107
201
1301
302
302B
1301L
107
104

FIG. 13


106T-F
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107
1400
107
106R-F
106T-M
106S-F
101
107
105
1402U
1404
107
107
1403
1408
1402B
1405
1407
1406
1402L
106S-M

FIG. 14

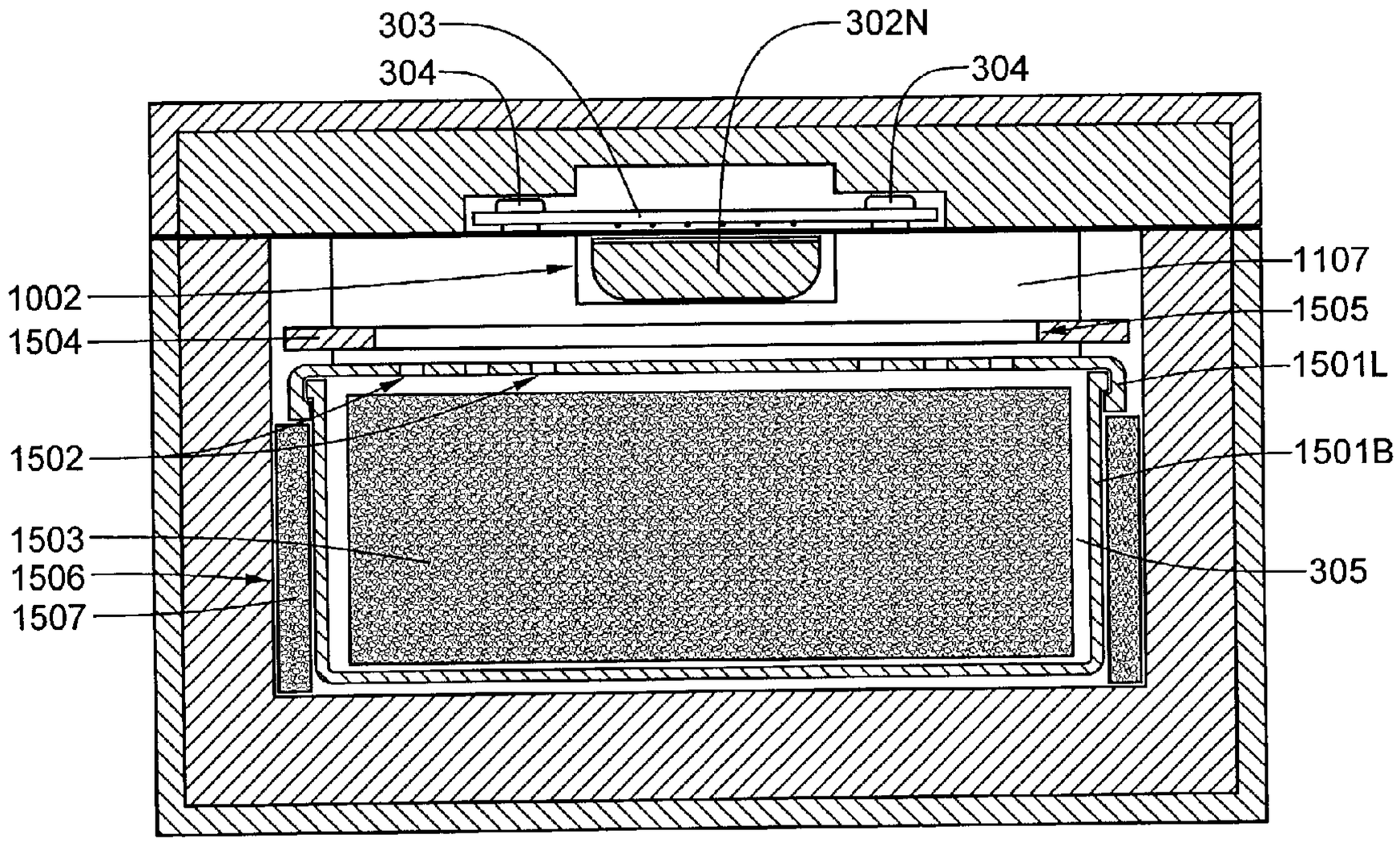
303
304
302N
304
1002
1504
1502
1503
1506
1507
1107
1505
1501L
1501B
305

FIG. 15

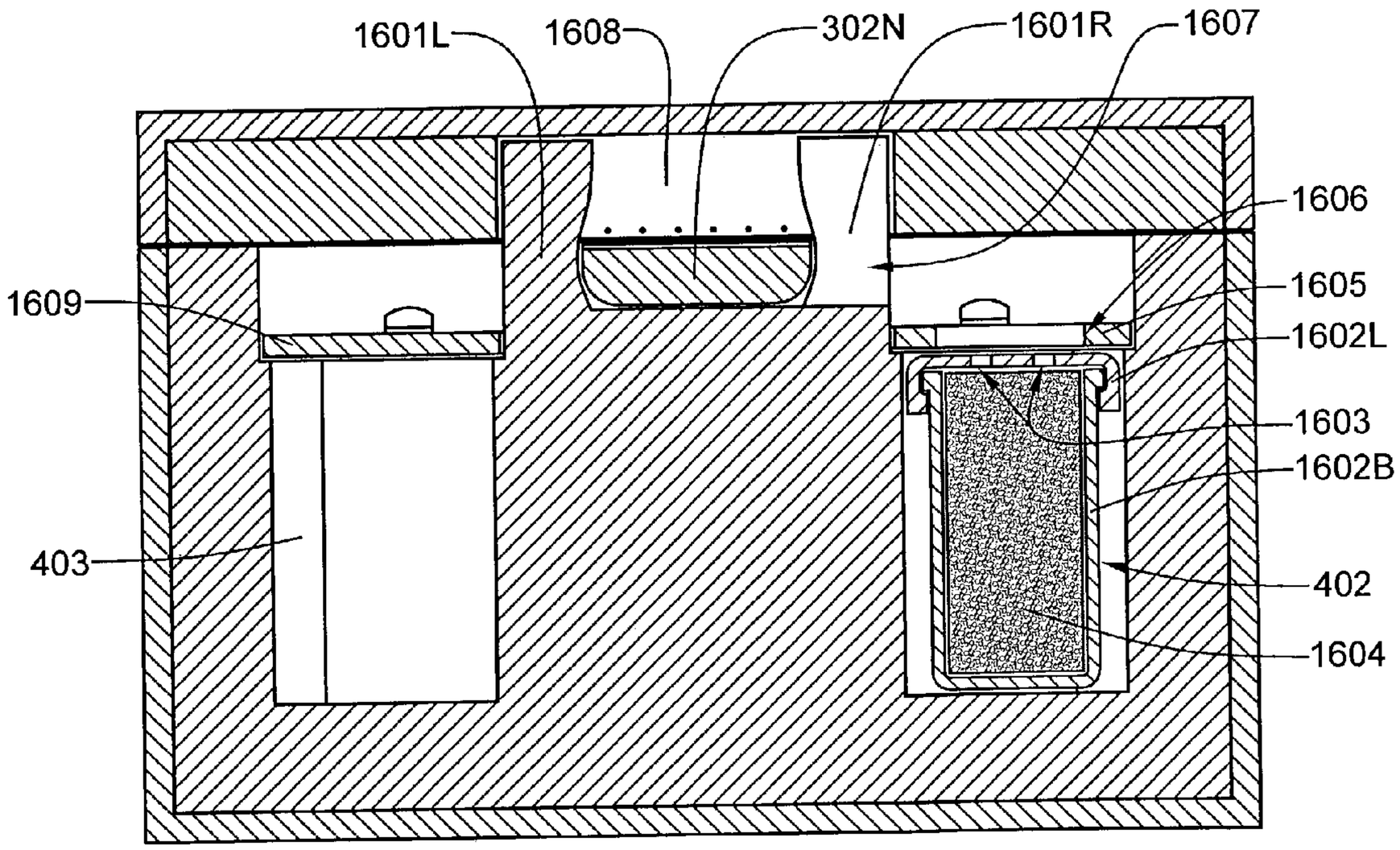
1601L
1608
302N
1601R
1607
1606
1609
1605
1602L
1603
1602B
403
402
1604

FIG. 16

CASE FOR STORING, CARRYING AND DISPLAYING A HANDHELD STRINGED MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

This invention generally relates to carrying and display cases for musical instruments and, more particularly, to a carrying cases for a hand-held stringed musical instruments which convert to free-standing display cases therefor.

2. Description of the Prior Art

Musical instruments are typically delicate and expensive devices. If roughly handled, metal wind instruments are subject to denting, bending and breakage. Acoustic stringed instruments, such as violins, violas, cellos, contrabasses, and guitars, are even more delicate, as acoustic requirements necessitate that they be fabricated from thin, single-ply wood sheets, which have been precisely carved and glued together. Not only are they structurally fragile, they can be damaged by extreme changes of temperature and humidity. Because the manufacture of acoustic stringed instruments requires a high degree of craftsmanship that is not easily duplicated by machine, the cost of such instruments ranges from expensive to astronomically expensive. As a consequence of the somewhat whimsical nature of the growth process, some pieces of wood, and the stringed instruments made from them, are inexplicably better than others. An exceptional violin can easily cost in excess of $100,000. Those handcrafted by Stradivari in the early eighteenth century can sell for millions.

Because of the delicate nature of stringed handheld instruments, the prior art is replete with carrying cases of nearly every genre for such instruments. Though it is assumed that many of these cases effectively provide for the safe transport and storage of such instruments, most are more of a nuisance than an assistance to musicians at the time of performance. It has become quite common for performers of popular music, such as rock, folk, country, and rhythm and blues, to use several instruments during a concert, or even during a single piece of music. Thus, a guitar player may alternate between acoustic and electric guitars, and may even perform without a guitar while singing. A saxophone player, on the other hand, may also perform on the clarinet. Such a musician needs a structure or apparatus in which he can temporarily store the instruments used during the performance. While a number of prior art carrying cases double as instrument stands, they are typically neither convenient carrying cases nor stable instrument stands. U.S. Pat. No. 4,147,254, issued to Jeffrey S. Bruce in 1979, discloses an instrument carrying case having a pair of opposed doors, each of which is hingeably mounted to a longitudinal top edge of the case. The doors fold back to support the case in a near-vertical position. U.S. Pat. No. 4,223,785, issued to Jacques in 1980, discloses an instrument carrying case, for a stringed instrument, having a pair of opposed clamshell doors, one of which is mounted to a top longitudinal edge, the other being mounted to an adjacent lower longitudinal edge. In an open position, the doors reveal both an instrument carrying pocket and an instrument display pocket oriented at a 90-degree angle to the carrying pocket. U.S. Pat. No. 4,474,290, issued to Joseph J. DeMato in 1984, discloses a guitar case and holder combination, which can be fixed by an auxilliary support member into a partially-open position. In the partially-open position, a guitar can be supported by a central outer portion of the case in an elevated position. U.S. Pat. No. 5,833,051, issued to

Jonathan Tiefenbrun and Peter J. Wilk in 1998, incorporates a folding triangular member on the bottom of the case which, when extended, supports the case in a near-vertical position. The top of the case detatches so that the lower portion can be used as an instrument stand.

In addition to the instrument carrying cases which double as instrument stands, there are a number of stands that support an instrument case in a near vertical position. U.S. Pat. No. 6,326,531, issued to Neil Bremner in 2001, is representative of that genre.

What is needed is a case for storing, carrying and displaying musical instruments, and primarily handheld stringed musical instruments. The case should be relatively compact, light weight and easy to carry, simple to manufacture, easily interconvertible between storage/carry and display modes, having a stable footprint and providing ready accessability to the instrument when used in the display mode, and protective of the instrument when used in any of the three modes.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A case for storing, carrying and displaying a handheld stringed musical instrument includes a main body incorporating an instrument receptacle, the body having a narrowed upper end portion for receiving the neck of the instrument and a widened lower end portion for receiving the body of the instrument, the case further including an articulated cover securable to the main body for reversably covering the instrument receptacle, the cover also being hingeably connected along a linear edge of the widened lower end portion of the body, foldable beneath the main body, and attachable to a medial portion of the back side of the main body. For a preferred embodiment of the invention, the linear edge is unitary with a lower panel that is obliquely inclined so as to form an obtuse angle with a back panel of the main body, thereby placing the case in a semi-recumbent position when the case is configured for display. For a preferred embodiment of the invention, the case is reclined about 20 to 30 degrees from vertical for the semi-recumbent display position.

For a prototype embodiment of the invention, the main body is constructed from a rear panel, a pair of side panels, an upper panel and a lower panel. The upper panel intersects and connects with both side panels and the rear panel, while the lower panel intersects and connects with both side panels and the rear panel. The side panels intersect and connect with the rear panel. For the main body of the prototype case, the upper panel is considerably shorter than the lower panel, resulting in a main body that is tapered, with a lower portion sized to receive the body of the stringed instrument and an upper portion sized to receive the neck of the instrument.

The prototype configuration may be modified to enhance both aesthetics and manufacturability, without departing from the basic invention. For example, the main body may be formed from a single continuous piece of vacuum-formed or injection molded polymeric plastic material, with or without reinforcing fiber content. It may also be formed from stamped aluminum, magnesium or titanium sheet metal. It may also be formed from interconnected plywood or fiberboard panels. The main body may also be shaped to more closely follow the contours of the stringed musical instrument. For example, the main body of a guitar case may approximate the shape of the instrument, as long as the lower panel of the main body incorporates a linear edge to which a cover is hingeably attached. In addition, the side, upper and lower panels may curveably interconnect with the

rear panel, and the upper and lower panels may curveably interconnect with the side panels. The top may be secured to the main body with snap-lock buckles, which are manufactured from injection tough molded polymeric plastic material, such as nylon, polycarbonate or ABS. The top panel may also be secured to a medial portion of the rear panel with a snap-lock buckle, which may also be used to secure an upper portion of the top to the main body when the case is being used for storage and transport of the stringed instrument.

For a preferred embodiment of the invention, one side of the case is fitted with a carrying handle, while the opposite side is fitted with a plurality of feet, on which the case rests when it is lowered to the ground. The rear panel of the case is also fitted with a plurality of feet, on which the case rests when the instrument is being placed in or is being withdrawn from the case. The outwardly-inclined bottom panel minimizes the complexity of the case by permitting the use of a two-piece—rather than a three-piece—top panel. Also for this embodiment, the lowermost edge of the cover lower portion is hingeably connected to the uppermost edge of the lower panel, with the cover upper and lower portions being hingeably interconnected along a line that is parallel to and spaced apart from the uppermost edge

The case for storing, carrying and displaying a handheld musical instrument may also incorporate a humidifier in a portion of the case below where the neck of the instrument is positioned. The humidifier includes a container having a perforated lid. A damp sponge is placed within the container, thereby maintaining a relatively constant level of humidity within the case.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. **1** is an isometric view of a first embodiment handheld stringed instrument carrying/display case fabricated in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. **2** is a top plan view of the first embodiment handheld stringed instrument carrying/display case;

FIG. **3** is a top plan view of the first embodiment handheld stringed instrument carrying/display case, with the cover removed and containing a guitar;

FIG. **4** is a top plan view of a second embodiment handheld stringed instrument carrying/display case, with the cover removed and containing a guitar;

FIG. **5** is a right-side elevational view of a closed first embodiment handheld stringed instrument carrying/display case;

FIG. **6** is a left-side elevational view of a closed first embodiment handheld stringed instrument carrying/display case;

FIG. **7** is a left-side elevational view of a first embodiment handheld stringed instrument carrying/display, with the upper portion of the cover folded back on the lower portion of the cover;

FIG. **8** is a left-side elevational view of a first embodiment handheld stringed instrument carrying/display, with both the upper and lower portions of the cover folded away from the case opening;

FIG. **9** is a right-side elevational view of a first embodiment handheld stringed instrument carrying/display case of FIG. **1** arranged in the display configuration, with the cover folded beneath the case and with the upper portion of the cover secured to the back side thereof;

FIG. **10** is an isometric view of a first embodiment handheld stringed instrument carrying/display case, showing the cover open both in front of the case and attached behind to the bottom of the case in the display configuration;

FIG. **11** is an isometric view of a first embodiment handheld stringed instrument carrying/display case, arranged in the display configuration; and

FIG. **12** is a top plan view of a third embodiment handheld stringed instrument carrying/display case, with the cover removed;

FIG. **13** is a top plan view of a fourth embodiment handheld stringed instrument carrying/display case, with the cover removed;

FIG. **14** is a right-side elevational view of a fifth embodiment handheld stringed instrument carrying/display case arranged in the display configuration, with the cover folded beneath the case and with the upper portion of the cover secured to the back side thereof;

FIG. **15** is a cross sectional view through line **15**—**15** of FIG. **3**, showing the built-in humidifier; and

FIG. **16** is a cross sectional view through line **16**—**16** of FIG. **4**, showing an alternative embodiment of the built-in humidifier.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The case for storing, carrying and displaying a handheld stringed musical instrument will now be described with reference to the included drawing figures. It should be understood that the drawings are merely representative of the invention, are not necessarily drawn to scale, and are not intended to limit the invention.

Referring now to FIG. **1**, a first embodiment case **100** for storing, carrying and displaying a handheld stringed musical instrument is trapezoidally shaped, having a body **101** incorporating an instrument receptacle (not shown in this view), the body having a narrowed upper portion for receiving the neck of the instrument and a widened lower portion for receiving the body of the instrument. The case also has an articulated cover **102** securable to the main body **101** for reversably covering the instrument receptacle. The upper portion **102**U of the articulated cover **102** folds back upon the lower portion **102**L of the cover **102**. The upper portion **102**U and the lower portion **102**L are joined at a hingeable joint along line **103**. The lower portion **102**L of the articulated cover **102** is hingeably connected along a linear edge **104** of the widened lower portion of the body **101**, and is foldable beneath the body **101**, and attachable to a medial portion of the back side of the main body. For a preferred embodiment of the invention, the linear edge **104** is unitary with a lower panel (not visible in this view) that is obliquely inclined so as to form an obtuse angle A (see FIG. **6**) of about 110 to 120 degrees a back panel of the main body, thereby placing the case in a semi-recumbent position when the case is configured for display. For a preferred embodiment of the invention, the case is reclined about 20 to 30 degrees from vertical for the semi-recumbent display position. Straps **105** equipped with releaseable buckles **106** are used to secure the cover **102** to the main body **101**. Releaseable buckle **106**T is used to retain the upper portion **102**U of the cover **102** to the main body, while releaseable buckle **106**S is used to retain the lower portion **102**L of the cover **102** to the main body. The main body **101** is also fitted with metal feet **107** for protection of the case covering or case finish from abrasion.

Referring now to FIG. **2**, a handle **201**, which is secured to the main body **101** is visible in this elevational view.

Referring now to FIG. **3**, the cover **102** has been removed from the first embodiment case to show the interior of the

main body **101**, which includes an instrument receptacle **301**. It will be noted that the instrument receptacle **301** is tapered so that the body of the instrument fits in the wider lower portion **301**L of the instrument receptacle **301** and the neck of the instrument fits in the upper portion **301**U of the instrument receptacle **301**. An acoustic guitar **302**, having a hollow body **302**B and a fretted neck **302**N, is shown positioned within the instrument receptacle **301**. It will be noted that a strap **303**, having snaps **304** at both ends thereof, secures the neck **302**N of the guitar **302** to the main body **101**. The first embodiment case **100** also includes a built-in humidifier **305**, which is later described in more detail with reference to FIG. **15**.

Referring now to FIG. **4**, a second embodiment case **400** is shown with the cover removed. The primary differences between the second embodiment case **400** and the first embodiment case **100** are the rounded exterior corners **401**, the smaller built-in humidifier **402** and storage compartment **403** of the former. The second embodiment case **400** also differs from the first embodiment case **100** in that it omits the strap **304** in favor of a padded channel that is more narrow than the fretted neck **302**N. Thus, the resiliency of the padding acts to retain the guitar **302** within the case.

Referring now to FIG. **5**, when the case is carried, the side visible faces the floor. Hence, it is also equipped with metal feet **107** for protection of the case.

Referring now to FIG. **6**, the case is carried by the handle **201**, which is secured to the side of the main body **101**. In the views of both FIG. **5** and FIG. **6**, the obtuse angle A formed between the bottom panel **101**B and the rear panel **101**R is clearly visible in this view.

Referring now to FIG. **7**, the upper portion **102**U of the articulated cover **102** has been folded back and on top of the lower portion **102**L of the cover **102** by disengaging the male buckle **106**T-M from the female buckle **106**T-M at the top of the case **100**.

Referring now to FIG. **8**, the buckles **106**S securing the lower portion **102**L of the cover **102** to the side panels **801** of the main body **101** have been released, thereby permitting the lower portion **102**L to be folded outwardly from the main body **101**. Each of the buckles **106**S includes a female buckle **106**S-F and a male buckle **106**S-M. In this view, the upper portion **102**U is shown folded beneath the lower portion **102**L.

Referring now to FIG. **9**, the first embodiment case **100** for carrying, storing and displaying a handheld, stringed musical instrument has been set up in the display configuration. The lower portion **102**L of the articulated cover **102** is folded beneath the bottom panel **101**B and the upper portion **102**U is folded upwardly so that the male half of the top buckle **106**T-M may be secured to a female half of a buckle **106**R-F affixed to a medial portion of the rear panel **101**R of the main body **101**. For this particular embodiment of the invention, the angle of reclination is about 25 degrees.

Referring now to FIG. **10**, an empty first embodiment case **100** is shown with the cover **102** positioned both in front of the main body **101** and positioned behind the main body **101**, with the upper portion **102**U of the articulated cover **102** attached to the outer surface of the rear panel **101**R panel of the main body **101**. It will be noted that both the upper portion **102**U and the lower portion **102**L of the cover **102** have a continuous channel **1001** that extends from about the sound hold region of the instrument to the tuning pin mounting block of the instrument.

Referring now to FIG. **11**, an empty first embodiment case **100** is shown configured in the display mode in an isometric view. It will be noted that the configuration is particularly rigid and stable. This view of the first embodiment case **100** is particularly demonstrative of nearly all of the case components. The case **100** includes a right-side panel **101**D, a left-side panel **101**L, a rear panel **101**R, a top panel **101**T, a bottom panel **101**B, a lower bulkhead panel **1106**, and an upper bulkhead panel **1107**. The cover **102** includes an upper portion **102**U and a lower portion **102**L. It will be noted that each of the bulkhead panels **1106** and **1107** contains a recess **1108** and **1109**, respectively, into which the neck of the instrument fits.

Referring now to FIG. **12**, a second embodiment **1200** of the case for carrying, storing and displaying a handheld stringed musical instrument is shown. The corners of the main body **1201** have been rounded to make it more aesthetically more pleasing and to make the case **1200** more compact. In spite of the difference in appearance, the functional features are the same.

Referring now to FIG. **13**, a third embodiment **1300** of the case for carrying, storing and displaying a handheld stringed musical instrument is shown. The main body **1301** of this embodiment closely fits the contours of the hollow-body acoustic guitar **401**.

Referring now to FIG. **14**, a fourth embodiment **1400** of the case for carrying, storing and displaying a handheld stringed musical instrument is shown. This embodiment is designed to reduce the physical dimensions of the case by eliminating the outwardly inclined lower panel of the previous embodiments. The main body **1401** has a bottom panel that is square with the rear panel. The cover **1402**, though still articulated, now consists of three hingeably interconnected panels, to wit, an upper portion **1402**U, a lower portion **1402**L, and a bottom portion **1402**B. When the cover is secured to the front side of the main body **1401**, the lower portion **1402**L and bottom portion **1402**B are perpendicular to one another. Only the bottom portion **1402**B is hingeably connected to the main body **1401**. Instead of being hingeably connected to the front edge **1403** thereof, it is hingeably connected to the rear edge **1404** with a rear-mounted hinge **1405**. Hinge **1406**, which is analogous to hinge **104** of the first embodiment case **100**, interconnects the bottom and lower portions (**1402**B and **1402**L, respectively) of the cover. Hinge **1407**, which is analogous to hinge **103** of the first embodiment case **100**, interconnects the lower and upper portions (**1402**L and **1402**U, respectively) of the cover **1402**. Hinge **1405** may be spring loaded so that the bottom portion **102**B is biased to pivot towards the bottom panel **1408** of the main body **1401**. This feature facilitates closing the cover **1402**, as the releaseable buckles **106** are, then, automatically placed in alignment with their mates.

Referring now to FIG. **15**, the details of the built-in humidifier apparatus **1500** are shown. The humidifier apparatus **1500**, which fits within the space between the lower bulkhead panel **1106** and the upper bulkhead panel **1107**, includes a container **1501** having a bowl shaped portion **1501**B and a lid **1501**L having a plurality of perforations **1502**. A damp sponge **1503** is placed within the container **1501**, thereby maintaining a relatively constant level of humidity within the case. The container **1501** is positioned beneath a panel **1504** in which an aperture **1505** is cut. The continuous channel **1001** of FIG. **10** provides a path through which humidity from the built-in humidifier apparatus **1500** can be distributed to the sound hole of the instrument and all along the fretted neck thereof. The container **1501** may be positioned within the recess **1506** with a piece of foam of either a rigid or flexible variety that is sized to fit the recess and which also has a cutout sized to receive the container **1501**.

Referring now to FIG. **16**, the second embodiment case **400** includes both a built-in humidifier **403** and storage compartment **404**. The second embodiment case **400** also differs from the first embodiment case **100** in that it omits the strap **304** in favor of a padded channel that is more narrow than the fretted neck **303**N. Thus, the resiliency of the padding acts to retain the guitar **302** within the case. In this view, it will be noted that the fretted neck **303**N is squeezed between left and right walls of padding **1601**L and **1601**R, respectively. The humidifier apparatus of the second embodiment case **400** includes a compact container **1602** having a rectangularly-shaped vessel portion **1502**B and a lid **1602**L having a plurality of perforations **1603**. A damp sponge **1604** is placed within the container **1602**, thereby maintaining a relatively constant level of humidity within the case. The compact container **1602** is positioned beneath a panel **1605** in which an aperture **1606** is cut. Water vapor is transmitted through the perforations **1603**, through the aperture **1606**, through a connecting channel **1607** to the main longitudinal channel **1608** which extends along the length of the fretted neck **303**N to the sound hole in the instrument body.

It should be obvious to those having ordinary skill in the art that a variety of hinges may be used to interconnect the upper and lower cover portions (**102**U and **102**L, respectively) of the cover **102**, as well as to interconnect the cover **102** to the main body **101**. For example, multiple individual hinges may be used for each joint, or a hinge extending the entire length of the hingeable joint may be employed. The types of hinges may include miniature versions of door and piano hinges, which have separate hinge pieces held together a pivot pin, bendable fabric hinges sewn to each of the joined members, or a live hinge of bendable thin polymeric material.

Although only several embodiments of the invention have been disclosed herein, it will be obvious to those of ordinary skill in the art, that changes and modifications may be made thereto, without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as hereinafter claimed.

What is claimed is:

1. A case for storing, carrying and displaying a handheld stringed instrument characterized as having an enlarged body and a narrow neck with a fingerboard, said case comprising:

a main body that is generally symmetrical about a longitudinal axis, said main body having an open instrument receiving cavity located therein, said instrument receiving cavity being at least as long as an instrument to be positioned within the case, said instrument receiving cavity having a lower portion for the body of an instrument and an upper portion for the neck thereof, said instrument receiving cavity being formed, in part, by a back panel and a bottom panel, said bottom panel intersecting and being continuous with said back panel, said bottom panel being the main body component most distant from the upper portion of the instrument receiving cavity;

a cover having a bottom cover portion for covering said bottom panel, an upper cover portion for covering at least a portion of said instrument receiving cavity upper portion, and a lower cover portion hingeably interconnected to both said bottom cover portion and said upper cover portion, said lower cover portion for covering at least a portion of said instrument receiving cavity lower portion, said bottom, lower and upper cover portions having outer and inner surfaces, said inner surfaces being reversibly securable to said main body, said bottom cover portion being hingeably connected to the bottom panel along a linear joint that is both perpendicular to said longitudinal axis and parallel to said back panel, said linear joint being located along a rear bottom edge of said main body, said bottom cover portion hinging away from said bottom panel, the outer surface of said lower cover portion folding back onto the outer surface of said bottom cover portion, said upper cover portion folding behind said back panel, and an upper edge of said upper cover portion reversably attaching to said back panel to establish a display mode configuration for the case.

2. The case of claim **1**, wherein said cover is securable to said main body with a plurality of buckles, each of which has male and female portions.

3. The case of claim **1**, wherein said upper cover portion is reversably attachable to said back panel by means of a buckle having male and female portions.

4. The case for storing, carrying and displaying a handheld stringed instrument of claim **1**, wherein said main body and said cover are generally trapezoidally shaped.

5. The case for storing, carrying and displaying a handheld stringed instrument of claim **1**, which further comprises a humidifier apparatus installed in said upper portion of said instrument receiving cavity, and wherein an inner side of said cover incorporates a channel that is in communication with said humidifier apparatus, humidity expelled from said humidifier apparatus being distributed to the body and neck of an instrument stored within the closed case through said channel.

6. The case for storing, carrying and displaying a handheld stringed instrument of claim **5**, wherein said humidifier apparatus is a container having a watertight bowl, a perforated lid securable to the container, and a water-absorbing device enclosed within the container.

7. A case for storing, carrying and displaying a handheld stringed instrument having an enlarged body and a narrow neck attached to the enlarged body, said case comprising:

a main body having a plurality of intersecting panels which define an instrument receiving cavity, said instrument receiving cavity having an instrument-sized opening through which the instrument may be placed within the instrument receiving cavity, said instrument receiving cavity also having a lower cavity portion for receiving the body of the instrument and an upper cavity portion for receiving the neck of the instrument, said lower portion having a linear edge associated with one of said intersecting panels that is located a maximum distance from the upper cavity portion along a rear bottom edge of said main body;

a cover for covering the instrument receiving cavity, said cover being hingeably connected to said main body at said linear edge, said cover comprising a bottom cover portion hingeably connected to said linear edge, an upper cover portion, and a lower cover portion hingeably interconnected to both said bottom cover portion and said upper cover portion via linear hinge joints that are parallel to said linear edge, said bottom cover portion covering a bottom panel of said main body when said cover is closed, said upper cover portion for covering said upper cavity portion, said lower cover portion for covering said lower cavity portion, said upper and lower cover portions being foldable, at least partially, beneath said instrument receiving cavity such that an upper edge of said upper cover portion is

reversibly connectable to a medial rear portion of said main body, said bottom cover portion hinging away from said bottom panel when said upper cover portion is connected to said medial rear portion.

8. The case for storing, carrying and displaying a handheld stringed instrument of claim **7**, wherein said front and back sides are generally trapezoidally shaped.

9. The case for storing, carrying and displaying a handheld stringed instrument of claim **7**, wherein said case is generally symmetrical about a longitudinal axis, and said cover is hinged to said main body along a bottom linear edge thereof, said bottom linear edge being generally perpendicular to said longitudinal axis.

10. The case for storing, carrying and displaying a handheld stringed instrument of claim **7**, which further comprises a humidifier apparatus installed in said upper portion of said instrument receiving cavity, and wherein an inner side of said cover incorporates a channel that is in communication with said humidifier apparatus, humidity expelled from said humidifier apparatus being distributed to the body and neck of an instrument stored within the closed case through said channel.

11. The case for storing, carrying and displaying a handheld stringed instrument of claim **10**, wherein said humidifier apparatus is a container having a watertight bowl, a perforated lid securable to the container, and a water-absorbing device enclosed within the container.

12. A case for storing and carrying a handheld stringed musical instrument, the case comprising:

a receptacle component having a recess sized to receive the instrument, said recess having an enlarged portion for the instrument's sound box and a narrowed portion for the instrument's neck;

a cover having hingeably interconnected multiple portions for sealing the recess of the receptacle component, said cover hinged at a bottom edge of said receptacle component and incorporating a channel;

a humidifier apparatus positioned within the narrowed portion of the receptacle, said humidifier apparatus including a container having a watertight bowl, a perforated lid securable to said bowl, and a water-absorbing device enclosed within said container; and

wherein said channel is in communication with said humidifier apparatus, so that humidity expelled from said humidifier apparatus is distributed to the soundbox and neck of an instrument stored within the closed case through said channel.

13. The case of claim **12**, wherein said water absorbing device is a sponge.

14. The case of claim **12**, wherein said water absorbing device is a cloth woven of synthetic fibers.

15. The case of claim **12**, wherein said bowl and lid are fabricated from polyethylene plastic material.

16. The case of claim **12**, wherein said humidifier apparatus is affixed within the narrowed portion.

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